

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION PROGRAM

WHAT IS AN ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION PROGRAM?

An Accident Investigation Program is a management tool by which accidents or injuries are systematically studied so that their causes and contributing factors can be identified and eliminated. Accident Investigation is a technique that allows an agency to "learn from its experience."

In addition to preventing future accidents, the Accident Investigation Program:

- Helps to identify inefficiencies, and improves total quality.
- Develops accident trend information.
- Focuses supervisors' attention on safety and helps them consider methods for preventing future accidents.
- Helps monitor the effectiveness of the agency safety program.
- Provides information for workers' compensation claims handling as well as regulatory reporting and record keeping.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR Accident Investigation Program?

Everyone in an agency shares the responsibility for the success of the Accident Investigation Program. Specific groups and their respective duties are as follows:

Management is responsible for planning and developing the system, and has the authority to enforce the program. In general, management will develop investigation forms and procedures; train supervisors and members of the safety committee; review accident reports and trends; and perform periodic program evaluations.

Supervisors will investigate accidents and identify their cause(s), and also develop suggestions, methods and techniques for preventing accidents.

Human Resource Professionals will participate in the process as outlined by their respective agency. In some cases, Human Resources may conduct the investigation, and complete the form. In other cases Human Resources will review and track the results of the investigations. Human Resources should be consulted at any time there is a question about the accuracy of the description of the accident, or the supervisor's description is significantly different than the employee's report.

Safety Committee Members may investigate accidents and determine their cause(s); review accident reports; and identify accident trends. The Safety Committee will report its findings to management.

Employees must report accidents promptly and participate in the investigation process. Whenever possible, employees should be encouraged to share insights with management about ways to prevent future accidents.

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STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

Before an accident investigation can be performed, any injured employees should receive immediate and proper medical attention. Hazards should be removed from the accident scene to prevent accidents to others. Thereafter, the following steps should be taken:

Determine The Facts

The investigator should identify and document all the facts of the accident. To do this, the person should:

- Interview the individual(s) involved as well as witnesses.
- Photograph the accident scene if possible.
- Diagram the layout of the accident scene, and the relationship of machinery and witnesses to the scene.
- Safely reenact the accident to ensure that no one else is injured.

Determine The Causes

The cause of an accident may be obvious and be determined immediately with relative ease. However, it is important to delve deeper and try to determine the underlying causes of an accident. These might include:

- Lack of employee or supervisor training
- Improper or outdated methods
- Lack of enforcement of safety regulations
- Inadequate machine maintenance

Determine The Corrective Action

Investigators should be aware that there may be more than one method or technique for eliminating the cause of an accident. It is also important to realize that a temporary corrective action may be appropriate if the most effective corrective action cannot be implemented immediately.

Review the Findings of the Accident Investigation

After an accident investigation has been completed, management should periodically review related forms and procedures. This will ensure that the quality of investigations remains high, and that corrective actions are adequate and have been completed.

Analyze Accidents

All accidents should be analyzed periodically for any trends or recurring problems. One should consider the date and time and location of the accident; the type of accident; the nature of the injury and body part(s) involved; and the employee's training and experience level.